

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
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USMISSION USUN NY
USMISSION SINAI

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 TEL AVIV 2256

FOR INR SAUNDERS AND NEA ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IS, XF
SUBJECT: SURVEYING THE CABINET ON PEACE ISSUES

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1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE EXPANSION OF THE CABINET AND THE
REFINEMENT OF ISSUES BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ITS NEIGHBORS
WHICH WERE HERETOFORE LARGELY THEORETICAL HAVE PROMPTED
THIS NEW SURVEY OF THE VIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL MINISTERS. THE
DMC'S JOINING THE COALITION HAS BROUGHT IN MINISTERS WHO
STAND FOR MORE MODERATION ON BEGIN'S WEST BANK PROPOSALS,
WHILE DIFFERING HARDLY AT ALL ON THE GOI'S POSITION ON
SINAI SETTLEMENTS. THE ADDITION OF TWO NEW MINISTERS
WITHOUT PORTFOLIO HAS MADE VIRTUALLY NO CHANGE IN THE

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CABINET'S COMPLEXION. GIVEN THE RE-THINKING AND
INTROSPECTION THAT FOLLOWED SADAT'S VISIT, THE REST
OF THE CABINET SHOWS LITTLE VARIATION FROM PREDICTABLE
RESPONSES. WEIZMAN'S STAR CONTINUES TO RISE AS HIS
PRAGMATISM AND STEADINESS BECOME INCREASINGLY EVIDENT.
SHARON REMAINS A POTENTIAL THREAT TO BEGIN FROM THE RIGHT
AND DAYAN'S INFLUENCE, ALTHOUGH STILL HIGH, HAS DECLINED

FROM ITS PEAK BEFORE THE SADAT VISIT. END SUMMARY.

2. THIS MESSAGE IS AN UP-DATE OF OUR EARLIER EFFORT AT ASSESSING VIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBERS ON ARAB-ISRAEL ISSUES (REFTEL). AN UP-DATING IS NECESSARY NOT ONLY BECAUSE THE CABINET HAS EXPANDED SINCE THE PREVIOUS EFFORT (OCTOBER 6, 1977) BUT BECAUSE SADAT'S INITIATIVES HAVE GENERATED RETHINKING AMONG ISRAELI LEADERS AND THE START OF NEGOTIATIONS HAVE CRYSTALLIZED ISSUES THAT LAST OCTOBER WERE STILL PERCEIVED IN ONLY GENERAL TERMS. THE CABINET'S UNANIMOUS ACCEPTANCE OF BEGIN'S PROPOSALS HAS IN A SENSE NARROWED THE RANGE OF OBSERVABLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL POSITIONS AND HAS TENDZD TO BLUR THE HERETOFORE USEFUL DOVE-HAWK DISTINCTION. AS A GENERAL CHARACTERIZATION THESE LABELS ARE STILL SOMEWHAT HELPFUL BUT NOT COMPLETELY RELIABLE FOR PREDICTING RESPONSES, FOR EXAMPLE, TO FURTHER REFINEMENT OF THE BEGIN PLANS FOR SINAI AND THE WEST BANK.

3. AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, THE BEGIN CABINET OBSERVES A DIVISION OF LABOR THAT IS FAR MORE STRICT THAN THAT WHICH PREVAILED AMONG MINISTERS IN PREVIOUS ISRAELI GOVERNMENTS. THE RESULT IS THAT CABINET MEMBERS NOT DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR FOREIGN AND SECURITY MATTERS SELDOM SPEAK OUT ON THESE ISSUES. THE EIGHT MEMBERS OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE (BEGIN, EHRLICH, YADIN, DAYAN, WEIZMAN, SHARON, HOROWITZ AND BURG) VERY MUCH LEAD WHILE THE SECRET

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REST OF THE CABINET, WITH ONE OR TWO EXCEPTIONS, ONLY FOLLOWS IN DEBATING THE ISSUES. IN GENERAL, BEGIN CONTINUES TO DOMINATE THE GOVERNMENT PARTICULARLY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BUT CRACKS AND CREAKS ARE BEGINNING TO SHOW UP AS THE PEACE MOMENTUM SLOWS.

4. THE NEW MEMBERS: ALTHOUGH THE ADDITION OF THE DMC TO THE COALITION WAS EXPECTED TO INJECT A DEGREE OF MODERATION, AS WELL AS HIGH CALIBRE TALENT, INTO BEGIN'S RIGHT-WING GOVERNMENT, THE SADAT VISIT AND SUBSEQUENTLY BEGIN'S PEACE PROPOSALS CHANGED MANY HALLOWED POINTS OF POLITICAL REFERENCE. IN ISRAELI TERMS BEGIN HAS MOVED FROM HIS FORMER GREATER ISRAEL THINKING, IF NOT BY A QUANTUM LEAP, THEN CERTAINLY A LONG DISTANCE. THE DMC MINISTERS NO LONGER STAND OUT AS NOTICEABLE DOVES AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND.

5. ALL FOUR DMC MINISTERS ARE STRONG PERSONALITIES, THE WEAKEST BEING THEIR LEADER, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER YADIN. ALL HAVE SIMILAR VIEWS ON THE PEACE ISSUES AND ARE GENERALLY FAITHFUL TO THE DMC PLATFORM. THEY DIFFER FUNDAMENTALLY WITH THE MORE HAWKISH MEMBERS OF THE CABINET ON SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY IN THE TERRITORIES, ESPECIALLY IN THE WEST BANK,

WHILE NEGOTIATIONS ARE UNDERWAY. THEY APPLAUD BEGIN'S NEW-FOUND MODERATION AS REFLECTED IN HIS PROPOSALS FOR SINAI AND THE WEST BANK. SIMILAR TO THE LABOR ALIGNMENT, HOWEVER THEY HAVE TROUBLE WITH BEGIN'S SELF-RULE PLAN FOR THE WEST BANK, PREFERRING A RESTORATION OF JORDANIAN RULE OVER MUCH OF THE AREA FOLLOWING BORDER ADJUSTMENTS ALONG THE LINES OF THE ALLON PLAN, OR AT LEAST IDF PRESENCE ON THE JORDAN RIVER FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD.

THE DMC'S PRINCIPAL CONCERN IS TO ASSURE SECURITY IN THE EAST WITHOUT PLACING LARGE NUMBERS OF ARABS UNDER ISRAELI RULE. THE DMC MINISTERS STRONGLY SUPPORT RETENTION OF THE RAFAH SETTLEMENTS, TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY HAVE PUBLICLY PROPOSED (YADIN, TAMIR AND AMIT) TRADING NEGEV TERRITORY FOR NORTH SINAI. ON THIS POINT THEY HAVE RUN AFOUL OF

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MANY IN HERUT AND THE NRP WHO OPPOSE YIELDING ANY PART OF PRE-9167 ISRAEL. (BEGIN IS ENIGMATIC IN PUBLIC ON THE IDEA OF A TERRITORIAL SWAP AND HAS DISASSOCIATED HIMSELF FROM THE SUGGESTION; IN PRIVATE HE IS MORE RECEPTIVE. DANAY FAVORS IT IN PRIVATE, IN PUBLIC HE IS NON-COMMITTAL.) YADIN, TAMIR AND AMIT (THE LATTER LESS SO), DO SPEAK OUT ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES; KATZ ALMOST NEVER. DIFFERENCES IN THEIR APPROACH SEEM NEGLIGIBLE BUT TAMIR IS SLIGHTLY MORE HAWKISH, KATZ MORE FOVISH, AND YADIN AND AMIT FALL IN BETWEEN.

6. HAIM LANDAU HAS BEEN CLOSE TO BEGIN EVER SINCE THEY WERE IRGUN COMRADES-IN-ARMS. HE IS PERHAPS THE ONE CRONY BEGIN HS IN HIS CABINET AND HE APPEARS TO BE COMPLETELY LOYAL TO BEGIN'S VIEWS, INCLUDING THE PEACE PROPOSALS. IT WAS ONLY THROUGH BEGIN'S ALL-OUT EFFORT THAT LANDAU BEAT OUT SHMUEL KATZ(WHO CAMPAIGNED IN HARD-LONE OPPOSITION TO BEGIN'S PROPOSAL) IN HERUT'S SELECTION OF ITS MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE.

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
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FOR INR SAUNDERS AND NEA ATHERTON

XU. A LIBERAL PARTY STALWART, MOSHE NISSIM COMES FROM THE MORE DOVISH SIDE OF THE LIKUD. HOWEVER, WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY HE ADHERES TO A RELATIVELY HARDLINE. MISSIM HAS NOT SPOKEN OUT ON THE PEACE ISSUES IN RECENT WEEKS AND HIS SPECIFIC VIEWS ARE NOT KNOWN TO US. HE CAN BE EXPECTED, HOWEVER, TO FALL IN WITH EHRLICH'S ACROSS-THE-BOARD SUPPORT OF BEGIN'S HANDLING OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, PERHAPS ADDING A LITTLE WEIGHT TO THE ANTI-NEW-SETTLEMENT-ACTIVITY SIDE OF THE CABINET WHILE REINFORCING THOSE INTENT ON RETAINING THE RAFAH AREA.

8. THE OTHER MINISTERS: OUR UP-DATE ON THE REST OF THE CABINET INVOLVES FEW CHANGES FROM THE GENERAL ATTITUDES REPORTED IN REFTEL. BURG SEEMS AT EASE WITH BEGIN'S PROPOSALS THOUGH HE MIGHT BE INCLINED TOWARD GREATER FLEXIBILITY ON THE WEST BANK.

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HAMMER, LATELY SOMEWHAT RETICENT ON FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS IS TROUBLED BY THE DIRECTION HE FEARS WEST BANK NEGOTIATIONS WILL TAKE, I.E., TOWARD SELF-DETERMINATION AND COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL. HE IS ALSO UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE PROPOSAL TO RECOGNIZE EGYPTIAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL SINAI AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO GIVE SOLID SUPPORT TO RETAINING THE RAFAH SETTLEMENTS. ABU-HAZEIRA SELDOM DISCUSSES FOREIGN POLICY AND IS NOT BELIEVED TO HAVE STRONG VIEWS. HOWEVER, HE WILL STAY IN STEP WITH HIS MENTOR, HAMMER, TO WHOM HE OWES HIS CABINET SEAT.

9. THERE IS A DISCERNIBLE DIFFERENCE AMONG LIBERAL PARTY MINISTERS OTHER THAN NISSIM. EHRLICH AND PATT RARELY SPEAK OUT ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TEND TO SUPPORT BEGIN IN CABINET DISCUSSIONS. ON A RECENT OCCASION HOWEVER, PATT DECLARED FLATELY THAT IN VIEW OF CAIRO'S REJECTIN, ISRAEL MAY WITHDRAW ITS PROPOSALS. PATT HINTED THAT

A SUBSEQUENT ISRAELI OFFER WOULD BE LESS GENEROUS. CONSIDERED DOVISH AMONG THEIR COLLEAGUES, EHRLICH AND PATT WOULD SUPPORT MODERATE POSITIONS IF IT DID NOT MEAN OPPOSING BEGIN. WE WOULD NOT EXPECT THEM TO DISSENT FROM ANY GENERAL CABINET CONSENSUS ON PEACE ISSUES OR TO GO OUT ON A MODERATE LIMB DESPITE THEIR INCLINATIONS. EHRLICH HAS SAID PRIVATELY THAT HE IS GREATLY IMPRESSED BY WEIZMAN'S STATESMAN-LIKE QUALITIES AND MODERATION AND HAS INDICATED LIBERAL PARTY SUPPORT FOR WEIZMAN IN A FUTURE CONTEST FOR SUCCESSION.

10. OF THE FOUR LIBERAL PARTY MINISTERS, MODAI IS BY A SHADE THE MOST HAWKISH. HE APPEARS INTENT ON MAINTAINING AN ISRAELI FOOTHOLD IN SINAI, PROBABLY TIED IN WITH HIS MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE NEWLY-DISCOVERED OIL AND GAS FIELDS IN THE GULF OF SUEZ AND SINAI. FOR EXAMPLE, IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH A POLOFF MODAI NOT ONLY STRESSED THE IM-

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PORTANCE OF THE RAFAH AREA TO ISRAEL BUT SPOKE WITH ASSURANCE OF FUTURE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN COOPERATION IN SINAI DEVELOPMENT, LEAVING THE IMPRESSION THAT THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE GUARANTEED IN A PEACE TREATY. MODAI ECHOES THE GOI LINE OPPOSING ANY WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WEST BANK.

11. LA'AM'S TWO MINISTERS, HOROWITZ AND SHOSTAK, ARE APPROPRIATELY HAWKISH. ALTHOUGH HOROWITZ'S BACKGROUND IS RAFI (LABOR PARTY) AND SHOSTAK IS FREE CENTER (BEFORE THAT, HERUT), BOTH SEEM AS ONE IN REFLECTING THE COMPLETE LAND OF ISRAEL STRAIN IN LA'AM. PERHAPS A BIT MORE THAN SHOSTAK, HOROWITZ IS NOT HAPPY WITH BEGIN'S CONCESSIONS IN SINAI AND IS BELIEVED TO BE ADAMANT AGAINST RELINQUISHING ISRALI CONTROL OF THE WEST BANK. LA'AM AND HOROWITZ IN PARTICULAR, CONTINUE TO REGARD DAYAN AS ITS UNCROWNED LEADER.

12. DAVID LEVY IS THE CABINET'S STAR LIGHT-WEIGHT AND THE BUTT OF NUMEROUS MORON-TYPE JOKES. HIS RECENT MISSION TO THE US TO PERSUADE ISRAELI EMIGRANTS TO RETURN IS VIEWED AS AN UTTER FAILURE AND AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE GOVERNMENT. LEVY IS ANOTHER MINISTER WHO IS ALMOST NEVER HEARD ON FOREIGN POLICY. A "MAN OF THE STREETS" WITH HIS FOCUS ENTIRELY ON DOMESTIC MATTERS, HE WOULD BE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW BEGIN'S LEAD UNRESERVEDLY ON PEACE ISSUES AND SETTLEMENTS.

13. WEIZMAN CONTINUES TO DEVELOP IN STATURE. AS HEAD OF THE DELEGATION TO THE MILITARY TALKS, HIS PROFILE HAS RISEN APPRECIABLY AND HE HAS CAREFULLY EXTENDED HIS INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCE BEYOND THE NARROW LIMITS OF MILITARY AFFAIRS WHICH HE TENDED TO OBSERVE THE FIRST

FEW MONTHS IN OFFICE. YET HE IS CAREFUL TO AVOID UP-STAGING BEGIN OR DAYAN. HIS IS A VOICE OF RELATIVE MODERATION IN THE CABINET AND HIS INFLUENCE OVER BEGIN ON PEACE ISSUES, WHICH AT THE MOMENT IS PERHAPS GREATER THAN ANYONE'S EXCEPT DAYAN'S, IS IN THE DIRECTION OF

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GREAT FLEXIBILITY. HOWEVER, HE WOULD NOT LIKELY WIN MUCH BACKING FROM HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES IN A CONFRONTATION WITH BEGIN IN THE OFF CHANCE THAT ONE MIGHT OCCUR. DESPITE HIS GROWING POPULARITY, WIZMAN'S POLITICAL BASE, AND THEREFORE HIS POWER, REMAINS LIMITED. HE HAS BECOME TOO MODERATE FOR HERUT HARD-LINERS; THE REST OF HERUT HAS BEGIN WHO IS NOW ABOUT AS DOVISH AS THEIR CURRENT TASTES WILL ALLOW. PARADOXICALLY, WEIZMAN'S POLITICAL STOCK HAS INCREASED MORE IN THE LIBERAL PARTY, WHICH FINDS HIS MODERATION A DELIGHTFUL SURPRISE, THAN IN HIS OWN.

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AMEMBASSY JIDDA
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FOR INR SAUNDERS AND NEA ATHERTON

14. SHARON. WE HAVE RECENTLY REPORTED SHARON'S VIEWS AND HIS POLITICAL STANDING AT CONSIDERABLE LENGTH (TEL AVIV 1745, 1787). HE IS THE CABINET'S LEADING HAWK AND THE ONE MOST LIKELY TO BOLT IF BEGIN OFFERED FURTHER COMPROMISES ON THE WEST BANK AND SINAI. SINCE SHARON'S RESIGNATION COULD PROVIDE BEGIN'S RIGHT-WING OPPOSITION THE LEADERSHIP IT NOW SORELY LACKS, BEGIN WILL THINK TWICE BEFORE CONCEDING MORE OVER SHARON'S OBJECTIONS.

15. DAYAN'S STANDS OUT IN THE CABINET FOR HIS STRONG ADVOCACY OF A JORDANIAN CONNECTION. MORE THAN HIS COLLEAGUES HE MAINTAINS THAT THERE WILL BE NO SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM WITHOUT AMMAN'S PARTICIPATION AND A ROLE FOR JORDAN IN THE FINAL ARRANGEMENT. OTHER THAN THAT, DAYAN'S VAUNTED ORIGINAL
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THINKING AND PRAGMATISM HAVE FOUND LITTLE OPPORTUNITY FOR EXPRESSION IN RECENT WEEKS. HE HAD HOPED SADAT MIGHT AGREE TO A SEPARATE PEACE; NOW HE UNDERSTANDS BETTER THE FACTORS WHICH HOLD SADAT BACK FROM THAT TEMPTATION. HE IS FRUSTRATED BY THE DISSOLUTION OF THE JERUSALEM TALKS AND REPORTEDLY CHAGRINED THAT IN CONTRAST, THE CAIRO DISCUSSIONS UNDER WEIZMAN ARE STILL ALIVE. A RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO SEEMS TO BE DEVELOPING AND DAYAN IS CURRENTLY RUNNING SECOND. WHILE DAYAN'S INFLUENCE REMAINS STRONG, HE HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT ECLIPSED BY WEIZMAN. IN SMALL PART THIS IS DUE TO HIS FAILURE TO ESTABLISH THE SAME RAPPORT WITH THE EGYPTIANS THAT WEIZMAN DEVELOPED FROM THE OUTSET. HOWEVER, DAYAN'S POSITION BEGAN ITS PERCEPTIBLE DECLINE WITH SADAT'S JERUSALEM VISIT. THE EROSION WAS A FUNCTION OF THE NEW HIGH-LEVEL DIRECTNESS THAT THE JERUSALEM AND ISMAILIA VISITS REFLECTED. BEGIN TOOK COMPLETE CHARGE AND DAYAN WAS NO LONGER SEEN BY THE CABINET (INCLUDING BEGIN) AS THE DIPLOMATIC WIZARD WHO CAN BY TURNS "SPEAK TO THE ARABS," IMPRESS THE AMERICANS AND CHARM THE US JEWISH COMMUNITY. IN FACT, HIS CURRENT US TOUR IS GETTING VERY MIXED NOTICES HERE AS REPORTS OF HEATED EXCHANGES WITH AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS WHOUP IN THE PRESS. THE CONTRAST WITH SADAT'S PUBLIC RELATIONS TRIUMPH IN THE US IS UNSTATED BUT GLARING. MOREOVER, DAYAN'S ARMS TO ETHIOPIA REVELATION IS SEEN AS A MAJOR GAFFE.

16. FINAL WORD ABOUT DAYAN'S FUTURE: A MAJOR DAYAN WEAKNESS WHEN HE IS COMPARED WITH WEIZMAN OR OTHER CABINET LEADERS IS HIS LACK OF POLITICAL BASE. BUT THINGS ARE STIRRING IN THIS AREA. IN ADDITION TO

HIS ADMIRERS IN LA'AM, DAYAN HAS A NUMBER OF SUPPORTERS

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IN THE LABOR PARTY AND EVEN IN THE DMC MOVEMENT UNDER DAYAN.

ITS WOULD-BE PROGRAM IS UNCLEAR BUT PROBABLY INCLINES

TO A HAWKISH FOREIGN POLICY LINE. ALTHOUGH IT IS PRE-

MATURE TO SPEAK OF A NEW PARTY, THIS KIND OF ACTIVITY

REINFORCES DAYAN'S STANDING IN THE GOVERNMENT AND KEEPS

ALIVE HIS DARK HORSE CANDIDACY AS A SUCCESSOR TO BEGIN.

WHATEVER RESULTS FROM THESE DISCUSSIONS, DAYAN REMAINS

ALONG WITH BEGIN AND WEIZMAN ONE OF THE "BIG THREE"

DIRECTING ISRAEL'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS.

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